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Prepare to Communicate with Excellence and Confidence



Prepare to Communicate with Excellence and Confidence

By Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND

Have you ever heard the sentiment that someone skilled in something was a “born _____ (athlete, musician, teacher, speaker...)”? All of the training and hard work that went into their level of expertise is discounted. Granted, an athlete may have a body built for pole vaulting or a pianist may have long fingers, but those attributes they are born with don’t guarantee success. Everyone who achieves success has invested in gaining knowledge and building their skills.

Communication skills are critical to our success, but most of us get minimal training in how to do it well. In fact, because we have been uttering words from an early age, it is often assumed we know all there is to know about communication. Would you agree we are often better at miscommunicating than at communicating well?!

Can you think of any person or profession that doesn’t depend on communication skills for success? The dietetics profession is no exception. In fact, much of our work as nutrition professionals depends on communicating well. We translate complex science and put it into meaningful context so our audiences, whether peers or the public, can build their knowledge and take positive action.

A question I like to ask my colleagues is this: *Which is more important to professional success: subject-matter expertise or communication expertise?* How do most answer? The most common response is subject-matter expertise. There is no question that is essential. Without nutrition expertise we can be dangerous. However, without communication expertise we can be ignored or misunderstood. Both are essential. With both, we can have tremendous impact.

A trait common to nutrition professionals is a desire to make a difference in people’s lives. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists *are* the food and nutrition experts. However, without communication skills experts have limited effectiveness. If you want to make a difference, communication skills are essential. RDNs who communicate well change lives.



If you feel unsure of your nutrition communication knowledge and skills, you are not alone! Most nutrition professionals lack training in nutrition communication. In fact, very few dietetics programs include a course in nutrition communication. The result is nutrition professionals with extensive expertise in food and nutrition who feel ill equipped to communicate their knowledge. They want to impact audiences and change lives, but feel ill prepared. It is for this reason, educators and practitioners reached out to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for help.

In response, ***Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide*** was developed by a team of 57 RDNs representing academia and diverse areas of practice, designed to equip all future and current RDNs with the knowledge and skills needed to communicate the science of food and nutrition with competence and confidence. I was privileged to serve as editor-in-chief. You can learn more about the book here:

<https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com/communicating-nutrition>

Ellie Krieger, MS, RDN, award-winning cookbook author, columnist, and television personality writes in the foreword: “While it might seem like some people have a natural knack for communicating, no one starts out a communications expert. You get there by stepping into the ring and keeping at it, integrating the tools of the trade, and building your skills along the way. This comprehensive text, filled with the insights of the best in the business, is your trusty companion for doing so.”

Without communication skills, nutrition professionals cannot compete with the myriad of crazy claims, gimmicks, fads, and falsehoods. They struggle with creating evidence-based messages that clearly and compellingly build knowledge, shift attitudes, and change behaviors. The public needs the expertise of RDNs, the nutrition experts, but if their messages are never heard, or are misunderstood or ignored, how can they make an impact? It’s time for the food and nutrition experts to become experts at communicating effectively.

How can a nutrition professional grow as a nutrition communicator?

Building nutrition communication knowledge and skills and putting ***Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide*** into practice is accomplished in three steps:

- A. Assess your starting point by completing a self-assessment – what are your current nutrition communication knowledge and skills?
- B. Begin with your goal in mind – determine your desired destination for communicating nutrition with excellence. Where and how do you want to improve this season?
- C. Chart your course by mapping the action steps that will take you from A to B. What do you need to learn and how can you put your knowledge into practice?

continued

Prepare to Communicate with Excellence and Confidence



Download and complete A, B, and C using “Your Journey to Communication Excellence” found here: <https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com/resources-to-supplement-the-book>

Repeat A, B, and C for continued learning and growth!

Where and how do you want to communicate more effectively? In presentations or demonstrations? In blogs or articles? In social media posts or interviews? Envision yourself successfully communicating with target audiences delivering clear, compelling messages that engage the audience, create interest, and inspire knowledge gains, positive attitudes, and life-changing behaviors. Nutrition professionals who communicate well change lives.

Communication is learned largely through doing, and even professionals with extensive backgrounds will agree they are always learning and improving their knowledge and skills. As you put your knowledge into practice, you will become more proficient.

Are you looking for continuing education hours? Take advantage of the 14 CPEUs available by completing an interactive online

quiz found at a link in the back of **Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide**. Taking this open-book quiz serves as a great review of the book’s contents.

You can grow as a nutrition communicator. Take the first step today.

❧
*“If you can’t communicate,
it doesn’t matter what you know.”*

~ Author Chris Gardner

❧

Portions of this article first appeared in the blog titled, “Communication is learned... let’s teach it!": <https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com/post/communication-is-learned-let-s-teach-it> and the blog titled: “What do experts need most?": <https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com/post/what-do-experts-need-most> and were also shared in a newsletter article for the NEHP DPG summer edition 2021.



Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND is the Founder and President of Nutrition Communicator, LLC.



Chair Message

Greetings NEP DPG members,

Now that we are several months into 2022, I hope that you, your family, and friends are all healthy and prospering. So much has changed in the last two years, but so much has also stayed the same. This month's newsletter article reminds us about how sharpening our communication expertise will remain a critical skill in our professional lives now and beyond.

As someone who began and continues her career focused on nutrition education and communication, I am fortunate to know and have worked with our feature newsletter article's author in the past at Purdue University and more recently as an author for two of the chapters in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' resource, *Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide*. I can personally attest to the timeliness and quality of this resource as well as the direct benefit it will provide to the members of our DPG. I encourage you to reach out to Barbara Mayfield, MS, RDN, LD, FAND for questions about this resource specifically or if you have other communication consulting needs.

Our DPG continues to seek new ways to retain and engage our members. Please know that we are always open to membership input on our DPG activities and are always seeking volunteers for our Executive Committee and Leadership Team. If you are interested in volunteering this current membership year or the 2022-2023 membership year, or know someone who would be interested in serving in a volunteer role, please contact us!

Please also feel free to share any timely topics that you would like highlighted in upcoming newsletters and webinars by emailing me or another member of our board. I can be most easily reached at the following email: amy.mobley@ufl.edu. We hope to hear from you soon.

Take care and best wishes,

Amy R. Mobley, PhD, RD, FAND

Chair, NEP DPG (2021-2022)

Associate Professor & Graduate Coordinator, Department of Health Education and Behavior
University of Florida

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NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

2021/2022-Issue 3:

Deadline – April 1, 2022

2022/2023-Issue 1:

Deadline – June 30, 2022

2022/2023-Issue 2:

Deadline – December 15, 2022

Student Insight

Students are integral parts of a successful DPG...Let's hear from involved members:

What is the importance of student involvement in a DPG?



JAMIE ZELDMAN

FIRST YEAR DOCTORAL STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA RESPONDS:

Being involved in a DPG is not only a way to be involved with an organization I feel passionate about, but it also provides several other benefits as a student member. This is my first year being involved in a DPG, yet I wish I joined earlier in my studies. As a student, it is often easy to get caught up in coursework, studying, volunteering, and more, but at the same time, there is so much that DPGs offer that are of great benefit to students. For me, joining this DPG, in particular, is one way I am able to stay connected with a group of people who have similar interests to me. I have already met several knowledgeable dietitians and students in the same boat as me, which makes joining a DPG a wonderful networking opportunity. Outside of the networking aspect, being a part of a DPG is a way to stay up-to-date on current research via educational resources and be knowledgeable about various leadership and scholarship opportunities available. As an undergraduate, I was under the impression that DPGs are primarily for established dietitians. But as a student member currently, I can honestly say that being involved in a DPG is beneficial for both professionals and students alike. I would highly recommend getting involved in one that you feel passionate about.



LILY MCNAIR

SENIOR, DIETETICS STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA-YUMA RESPONDS:

The most important part of student involvement in a DPG is the ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse voices in dietetics. Hearing the thoughts of students just entering the profession, coupled with the wisdom and insights of experienced dietetic professionals, is an extremely valuable, and too often, rare opportunity. As a DPG student member, it's been extremely beneficial to me to be able to learn from experienced dietitians and fellow student members at the same time; it gives me a better understanding of dietetics, as a whole, and in more specialized areas of dietetics. It offers a view of the past, present, and future of dietetics. Through my student DPG involvement, I've gained stronger communication, leadership, and professional skills that will last a lifetime (and hopefully as a future dietitian still active in a DPG). I believe that student involvement in a DPG offers a win-win situation, in which students and professionals can grow together in the lifelong learning journey.

Perspective on the 2022 Nutrition and Dietetics Advocacy Summit



JOSIE ORTIZ

DIETETIC INTERN, ISPP PROGRAM, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO RESPONDS:

I had the opportunity to attend the virtual 2022 Nutrition and Dietetics Advocacy Summit held in January 2022. To attend, I applied for and was granted a scholarship from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The 3-day summit consisted of two days of training, and the third day meeting with your State Senator's representative. Since I am based in California, our team met with Senator Feinstein and Senator Padilla's representatives.

Attending the summit for the first time was such a great experience. The focus of this year's summit was on the Medical Nutrition Therapy act of 2021 (S. 1536/H.R. 3108). This would expand coverage of MNT in Medicare Part B beyond diabetes and renal disease. The other focus was on child nutrition, which is expanded within the Build Back Better Act. Attendees were provided with training and resources on how to advocate for these important issues.

The biggest takeaway I received from attending was the importance of getting involved in advocacy. A few things students can do to get involved:

- Ensure you're registered to vote in local and national elections.
- Vote in the Academy's elections.
- Become a Student Star ANDPAC Donor by contributing \$25 or more in a calendar year.
- Join the ACT now for MNT campaign.
- Apply for the Academy's Policy Initiatives and Advocacy internship rotation.
- Join the Academy's Affinity Groups and connect with fellow academy members.
- Visit the Academy's Action Center to amplify your voice.
- Connect with your Public Policy Coordinator.

All of this can be obtained by visiting the academy's advocacy page. There are so many networking opportunities to be gained from being a part of a great group of fellow Academy advocates. I believe this to be important while a student because it provides direction and confidence to networking and will help with public speaking. I have found a new passion for advocacy and plan to apply for the Public Policy and Advocacy Leader (PAL) within the NEP DPG. But first, I must get through my internship and pass the RDN exam. I wish the best of luck to all of us preparing for the exam. We got this!

All are student members of the NEP DPG Leadership Team as student liaisons.

Heart Healthy Meal Prep: 6 Weekly Plans for Low-Sodium, High-Flavor Grab-and-Go Meals

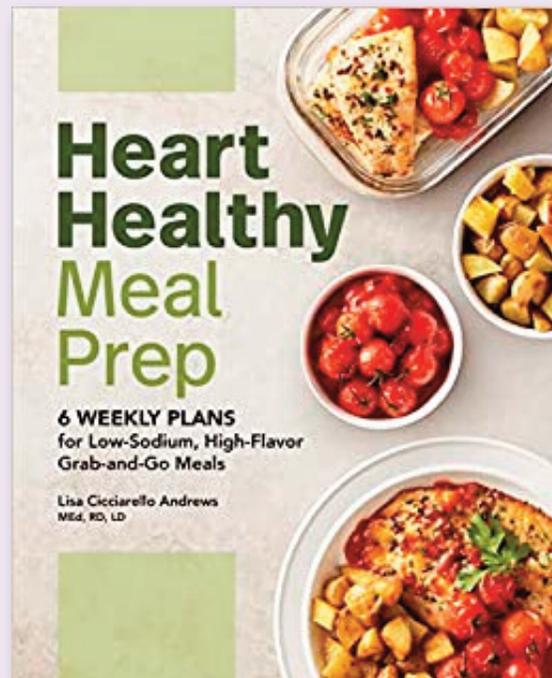
By Lisa Ciciarello Andrews, MEd, RD, LD

Heart disease is a threat to many Americans. Unfortunately, it remains the number one killer in the U.S. Lisa Ciciarello Andrews, MEd, RD, LD, has taken the latest research on treating and reducing risk of cardiovascular disease and combined it with heart healthy eating plans and recipes that are easy to implement. Connecting through her personal experience with her father's heart condition, plus the vast experience she has working with cardiac clients, Lisa understands the connection between diet, lifestyle behaviors and heart health all too well.

Much of the information in this book has been written about before, but Lisa provides a fresh approach with simple recipes and easy-to-understand details about heart health and diet. Recipes such as *Black Bean and Avocado Breakfast Burritos* and *Cherry Oatmeal Energy Bites* encourage readers to get involved in self-care. The photos entice even the basic cook to get in the kitchen to take charge of the family's health. She includes evidence-based guidelines and insight on food/drug interactions, beneficial macro- and micro-nutrients of importance for heart health, as well as tips for label reading and kitchen basics.

This book provides a 6-week meal-prep plan and more than 40 recipes for success. As a dietetic intern, I found this book to be a very valuable tool for anyone that has or would like to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Book reviewed by Sofia Marsetti, a dietetic intern with Nutrition Ink in Banning, CA.



Members: Please share books you would like to see reviewed in future issues by contacting newsletter editors.

Focus on Resources

By Adrienne Forman, MS, RDN, CDN

NUTRITION COMMUNICATIONS

FOR THE CONSUMER

Food Insight

International Food Information Council (IFIC)

<https://foodinsight.org>

[Food Insight](#) is the information hub for the International Food Information Council (IFIC), an educational organization that aims to effectively communicate science-based information on health, nutrition and food safety. Food Insight provides a [newsletter](#), and resources on nutrition, food safety and IFIC's consumer surveys. Topics include [Consumer Surveys: A Continued Look at COVID-19's Impact on Food Purchasing, Eating Behaviors and Perceptions of Food Safety](#), December 13, 2021; [What Is Allulose?](#), by Kris Sollid, RD, December 15, 2021, [4 Metabolism Myths, Busted](#) by Alyssa Pike, RD, January 11, 2022. Website info is also available in Spanish and Portuguese.

Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter

<https://www.nutritionletter.tufts.edu>

[Special Supplement: 10 Red Flags of Misleading Nutrition Claims](#), updated in 2020, is a checklist from the Food and Nutrition Science Alliance (FANSA), a group of health and nutrition organizations, including AND. The red flags list helps consumers evaluate nutrition recommendations and claims that may be found in media news, books or product ads.

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)

National Institutes of Health

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov>

NCCIH mission is to review and determine the science, usefulness, and safety of complementary and integrative health approaches and their roles in improving health and health care. [Know the Science](#) provides content in interactive modules, videos, quizzes that may help consumers better understand scientific topics relating to health research, so they can make well-informed decisions about their health. [Know the Science: 9 Questions To Help You Make Sense of Health Research](#) helps viewers understand the parts of a research study and outcomes so they can make better health decisions. [Know the Science: The Facts About Health News Stories](#) offers relevant points, questions and answers to help viewers figure out if a media news story is reliable or has missing, misleading, or conflicting information. Know the Science is also available in [Spanish](#).

MedlinePlus

National Institutes of Health

<https://medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus is a free, online health information resource for patients, families and friends. It is written to be easy-to-understand and is also available in [Spanish and other languages](#).

[Easy-to-Read Health Information](#) has links arranged alphabetically to health topics or medical conditions. Examples include [Health Tips for Pregnant Women](#), also in [Spanish](#); [Getting Started on DASH](#), also in [Spanish](#). (Note: For writers or RDNs who write material for clients, MedlinePlus identifies easy-to-read materials using [Health Education Materials Assessment Tool](#).)

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

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Myths and facts are highlighted in some articles such as [Building a Healthy Vegetarian Diet Myths and Facts](#), by Alexandra Caspero, MA, RD, and Sarah Klemm, RDN, CD, LDN, October 2021; [4 Metabolism Myths and Facts](#) by Esther Ellis, MS, RDN, LDN, April 2019. Another article is [What's the Deal with Detox Diets?](#), by Robin Foroutan, MS, RDN, January 2022.

continued

Focus on Resources

continued

FOR THE PROFESSIONAL

Nutrition Communicator

<https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com>

The [Nutrition Communicator](https://www.nutritioncommunicator.com) website offers information related to content in the book [*Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide*](#), 2020, with Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, FAND, editor. The 42-chapter book provides knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver nutrition communication that is professional, science-based and audience-focused in a variety of settings, including print, video, demonstrations, and mass media. The website contains a downloadable [sample of the book with its table of contents and preface](#). On the [website home page](#), click *Get a taste of the book!* for a free 8-page eBook that shares key principles from the book with practical action steps. Click on the header [Resources](#) for [free resources](#) that include new tips every week and a new tip sheet every 5 weeks. An example of [free tips sheets](#) is [Tip Series 35: Keys to Communicating Nutrition](#). Also included are postings of [kids club lessons and songs](#) for teaching young children, and [resources for promoting family meals](#).

[Blogs](#) are also available on the website. An example, posted January 2022, [Communicator, it's time to celebrate! You've reached the finish line!](#), summarizes steps for creating compelling communication, and getting ready for delivery.

Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI)

by Oxford University Press (OUP)

<https://academic.oup.com/jnci>

[Improving Public Understanding: Guidelines for Communicating Emerging Science on Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health](#). Guidelines are based on an advisory group convened by Harvard School of Public Health and International Food Information Council Foundation. It offers questions for various types of communicators, scientists and journalists to consider, which can help ensure that media reporting and presentations on study findings are accurate, balanced, and improve consumers' understanding of study's relevance to diet and health information. Originally published in the JNCI in 1998; may still be helpful for communicators. JNCI, Vol. 90, Issue 3, 4 February 1998, pages 194–199.

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www.todaysdietitian.com

[Communicating Nutrition Research](#) is an article by Emily A. Callahan, MPH, RDN, and Karen Collins, MS, RDN, CDN, FAND, in *Today's Dietitian*, May 2018, Vol. 20, No. 5, p. 38.

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

<https://www.nia.nih.gov>

NIA provides an article on [Tips for Improving Communication with Older Patients](#).

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Focus on Resources

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FOR THE PROFESSIONAL

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<http://www.eatrightstore.org>

[Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide](#), with editor Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, FAND, 2020. As an option, 14 CPEUs are available for free, after reading purchased book and completing an interactive quiz at the link provided in the book (699 pages, SKU 017020 for book or SKU 017020e for eBook; either type is \$69.99 members, \$89.99 nonmembers).

[Practice Paper of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Social Media and the Dietetics Practitioner: Opportunities, Challenges and Best Practices](#). *J Acad Nutr Diet*. Volume 116, Number 11 Pages 1825-1835 (November 2016)

[Working with the Media: A Handbook for Members of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#), is a revised edition of the Academy's public relations handbook, produced by its Strategic Communications Team. The handbook includes advice on communicating effectively to the public and media, and developing working relationships, pitching relevant food and nutrition stories, and conducting interviews with the media. Some new features include Academy messages and talking points to use in interviews and materials, and new story ideas and resources. (Note: For help working with the news media, members may contact the Communications Team at 800/877-1600, ext. 4769 or by email media@eatright.org).

[Standing with Science: Identifying and Analyzing Credible Nutrition Research in the Misinformation Age](#) is a webinar to help an RDN be a clear, reliable source of nutrition information for clients. Moderator is Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, FAND, with speakers Virginia C. Stage, PhD, RDN, and Katie McKee, MCN, RDN, LD. (SKU LOSWS02272020, for 1.0 CPEU; \$24.00 members; \$54.00 nonmembers).

[Mastering the Media: An #RDChat](#), is a webinar with moderator Robin Plotkin, RDN, and speaker Marissa Moore, MBA, RDN, LD (SKU LOCTNN03112020, for 1.0 CPEU; \$24.00 members; \$54.00 nonmembers)



Adrienne Forman, MS, RDN, CDN is a nutrition communications consultant in New York.